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STALIN FULLY REHABILITATED AS WARTIME LEADER:

Soviet Military Now Appear
To Be Reaching For More Power

"...From the memoirs of these Soviet military leaders, J. V. Stalin, for all the complicated and contradictory nature of his character, appears before us as an outstanding military leader."

Doctor of Historical Sciences E. Boltin,
"The Moving Pages of the Annals of the
Great Fatherland War," Moscow, Kommunist
No. 2, 1969.

With these words historian Boltin concludes a review of 6 books by Soviet military men who were prominent in their country's victory over Hitler's forces in 1941 to 1945. (See the attached chart for essential details from the review.) Earlier in the article Boltin asserts: "these books allow us to recreate the distinguishing traits of the supreme commander [Stalin] as the leader of the Soviet Armed Forces in the war years. Not a stone remains in place of the irresponsible statements [by Khrushchev] about Stalin's lack of military competence, of the claim that he conducted the war with the help of a globe, of his alleged absolute intolerance of the opinions of others, and other fabrications of this kind which have been grasped and spread by foreign falsifiers of history."

Although the reviewed books are not all new -- four were published in 1968, one in 1967, one in 1966 -- their current impact in the USSR is expected to be great. For one reason, as Boltin avows, they are treated as a collection of historical sources which "carry an enormous charge of patriotic feelings and educate our people in loyalty to the ideas of communism, love for the socialist motherland, and readiness to defend the great revolutionary victories of the working people." A far more important reason is that Boltin's commentary is carried in the most authoritative theoretical journal of the CPSU; few of Kommunist's 760,000 subscribers will miss the immediate point that the Party now officially and unequivocally endorses Stalin's wartime leadership.

Many will ask: What does this mean? Why now? After all, it was clear to observers that de-Stalinization ran out of steam not long after Khrushchev was overthrown. Moreover, the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime has taken several tentative steps since May 1965 to rehabilitate Stalin as a wartime leader and has, since March 1965, been engaged in a step-by-step campaign to reverse the damage to the Party's image which resulted from Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization. In so doing, the Party has resorted increasingly to Stalinist techniques and attitudes in executing its own internal policies.

Clues -- but only clues -- to the answers to these questions are contained in Boltin's article, in other articles in the same issue of Kommunist, and in articles in other recent Soviet publications, especially in the Red Army newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star).

Boltin's piece is remarkable in that the author offers little substantiating testimony from the six war memoirs for his sweeping conclusions:

--Three of the reviews quoted no statement concerning Stalin;

--One review noted only that the book's author, Marshal Meretskov, worked with seven named persons, including Stalin;

--The review of Yakovlev's book noted that the author, an aircraft designer, judged from Stalin's directives and remarks that the latter showed a detailed knowledge of aircraft technology and assisted specialists and designers in finding new solutions to scientific and technical problems;

--Boltin's review of Shtemenko's book mentioned Stalin in only one paragraph, in which he states that Shtemenko described the style and methods of the Stavka (Headquarters) leadership, and the "strict and meticulously observed order of work established by J. V. Stalin," or how preliminary discussions were carried out by a number of commands with "the firm decisions finally made by the supreme commander [Stalin];" Boltin comments that Shtemenko's description will aid researchers to correctly assess Stalin's role in achieving victory.

In contrast to Boltin's leap to an unsubstantiated conclusion regarding Stalin is his presentation of pertinent information and his cogent reasoning on other subjects, for example, the steps by which the Soviet Air Force overcame initial Luftwaffe superiority. Another notable point is that Boltin simply ignores Khrushchev's charges that Stalin's leadership left the USSR poorly prepared for the war and that Stalin ignored clear warnings of Hitler's impending invasion thus causing heavy losses early in the war. Boltin also conveniently ignores current Defense Minister Grechko's very unkind article about Stalin's war preparations which was published in a historical journal in June 1966, the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the war. One has the impression that Boltin was under pressure to produce an article proclaiming Stalin's rehabilitation as a wartime military leader; this rehabilitation will probably be the only aspect of the article which will be remembered.

In trying to rehabilitate Stalin as a military leader, Boltin often appears to be grasping at straws in order to justify Stalin's military-strategic leadership abilities. But there is no mention of Stalin's greatest wartime accomplishment as a symbol to the Soviet people and

troops as a cohesive, spiritual force. Boltin obviously cannot praise or even refer to this aspect of Stalin's war role without opening a Pandora's box -- that is, opening up the Cult of Personality to discussion and scrutiny.

Two other articles in the same issue of Kommunist are notable because they also present favorable views of Stalin. One article, entitled "New Comintern Document" (the reprint of a document dated 1 April 1936), goes to some lengths to describe the then contemporary world situation and the aims and demands of the World Communist Movement. The article sets off, evidently for purposes of emphasis, the following quotation of Stalin and the lessons that should be drawn:

"'War can break out unexpectedly. Nowadays war does not announce itself. It simply begins' (Stalin). Above all, this demands from the Communists a clear understanding of the dimensions and nature of the threat of war, the orientation of all party organizations to the struggle to preserve peace, elucidation of the basic provisions of the present resolution to the mass of party members, the party's mobilization from top to bottom for the immediate carrying out of the instructions and lines of this resolution."

Besides suggesting that Stalin was, after all, aware of the approaching war and was ordering Communists to prepare for it, the article also notes that March 1969 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Comintern (Communist International) by V. I. Lenin. This was apparently an introduction to what thus far promises to be a low-key celebration in the USSR of the anniversary of an organization that was so markedly an emanation of Stalin's power that it has rarely been mentioned in the Soviet press in recent years. The Comintern was used as an instrument for enforcing the support of all Communist parties for the policies and objectives of the USSR.

Another article in this issue of Kommunist, entitled "Maoism and the Anti-Marxist Essence of its 'Philosophy,'" by A. Rumyantsev, contains a passage criticizing Nikolay Bukharin, whom Stalin had executed in 1938 and whom Khrushchev was reportedly preparing to rehabilitate before being overthrown in October 1964. Rumyantsev terms Bukharin "one of the propagandists of the 'Theory of Equilibrium' and an extremely active opponent of the Marxist dialectics." Could this be the first sound to be raised in favor of tempering the excoriation of Stalin for the terror of the 1930's?

These articles, unusual though they may be, nevertheless have been preceded by abundant signs of re-Stalinization since early 1965. The Western press has analyzed this phenomenon in considerable detail. The points most commonly cited as evidence of the recrudescence of Stalinism, (any one of which could be discussed separately in extenso) seem to be the following:

--Repression of intellectuals (arrest and trials of writers, harsh criticism of journalists and artists);

--Repression of national minorities (Ukrainians, Tadzhiks, Balts, so-called Zionists);

--A clamp-down on political activities of scientists;

--Slow-down in economic reform (major elements of the program are not being implemented, significant discussions of key problems no longer appear in the economic press);

--Restoration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD);

--The Brezhnev doctrine of "limited sovereignty" (asserting the "duty" of socialist forces to intervene in the affairs of a socialist country which the socialist community deems threatened by ideological subversion);

--Attacks on "Revisionism," specifically the Rumanian and Yugoslav practice of Communism;

--The persistently expanding political role of the Soviet military leaders.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant of these is the latter development. Not only were the military prominent in Kommunist's rehabilitation of Stalin as a wartime leader, but they themselves -- apparently in a bid for increased influence -- have contributed several striking and probably controversial articles to recent Soviet military publications. Most notable is one written by Major General Konstantin S. Bochkarev, a military theoretician, in the 14 February issue of the Ministry of Defense Daily Red Star (Krasnaya Zvezda). Bochkarev takes it upon himself to unequivocally support the Brezhnev Doctrine, declaring that no country "can be independent of the basic reality of our time: the division of the world into two antagonistic camps, socialist and imperialist, and the fierce class struggle between them. And the circumstance that in such conditions the side of the class barricades on which a country finds itself in decisive measure determines its fate, including the fate of its sovereignty." Elsewhere in the article Bochkarev was clearly directing criticism, and possibly even implied threats, to the Rumanians and Yugoslavs. Whereas Brezhnev, in his speech of 12 November to the Polish Party Congress, allowed for some transient differences among Communist Parties, Bochkarev said that deviation of socialist countries from military unity was impermissible and declared:

"A Leninist understanding of internationalism is the guide for all genuinely revolutionary parties of the working class. It is precisely reflected in the CPSU program, in the decisions of the 23rd CPSU Congress and of the CPSU Central Committee Plenums, in the documents of the Moscow conferences of communist and workers' parties, and also in the Bratislava declaration of the leaders of the six socialist countries."

Bochkarev's comments were consistently on the militantly orthodox side of issues he discussed. On the other hand, non-military media like the government daily Izvestiya and the Labor daily Trud have been taking relatively more moderate positions on controversial issues and have been extremely tight-lipped in connection with the Brezhnev Doctrine.

The Soviet military have advocated -- albeit often only indirectly -- their own parochial positions on major policy issues. For instance major Moscow papers reported several paragraphs from Gromyko's 3 October speech to the UN concerning strategic arms control and the USSR's willingness to begin talks with the U.S. on this subject, whereas Red Star's report on the Gromyko speech was edited to omit any mention of the paragraphs on strategic arms limitation. A similar indication of military opposition to arms limitation talks is seen in press coverage of a foreign ministry statement urging prompt action on the arms limitation talks in January 1969. While the Moscow dailies published faithful accounts of the statement, Red Star only published excerpts which failed to reflect the note of conciliation which the statement as a whole contained and, to the contrary, stressed international uncertainties and the need for undiminished vigilance.

A less publicized article, but one which stresses an autonomous role for the military in the Soviet society, was published in December 1968 in the journal Communist of the Armed Forces* and entitled "The Contemporary Revolution in Military Affairs and the Combat Readiness of the Armed Forces." Its author, Lt. Col. V. Bondarenko, writes:

"... Inasmuch as the military field is a relatively independent area of social life, it has its own logic of development.

"... In some studies, the sole cause of the revolution in military affairs is declared to be politics, and sometimes individual political organizations alone, or even just their leaders. Such a viewpoint is untenable....

*Kommunist Vooruzhennikh Sil, the organ of the Main Political Directorate of the Ministry of Defense.

"The radical upheaval in military affairs is a natural, objective stage in the development of military science on the one hand, as is the development of society (its economic, scientific power and political aims) on the other. Political organizations and their leaders can merely make use of this objective process for their political purposes (then their activity accelerates, 'organizes' the revolutionary transformations in military affairs), or conversely, fail to utilize the available opportunities (then their activity retards the process of revolutionization of military affairs)."

There will undoubtedly be many interpretations of the real significance of neo-Stalinism in the light of recent developments in the USSR. The interest in the subject by free world observers is demonstrated by the attention focused on the current prolonged absences of several Soviet leaders believed to advocate moderate policies and the mysterious 22 January shooting at a motorcade of party and government leaders and astronauts just inside the Kremlin's Borovitsky gates. Essential to any analysis of, or conjecture on, the murky political scene in the USSR is some understanding of the actual and potential role within Communist Party councils of the top military group. Whereas information on this subject is scarce and imprecise, it is nonetheless clear from developments since 1964 that the role of the military has expanded substantially. And the recent documents cited above provide ominous indications that the military are bidding for a still greater role.

Excerpts from article "V.I. Lenin and the Defence of the Achievements of Socialism: The Great International Duty" by Major General K. Bochkarev, in Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star) 14 February 1969.

...As the April 1968 plenum of the CPSU Central Committee emphasized, because they are not resolved on an open global clash with the main forces of socialism (but have not stopped preparations for this), the imperialists resort increasingly to new and more refined methods of struggle and to organizing ideological and political sabotage calculated to undermine the socialist world from within and disunite the states that are part of it. Socialist bases and socialist principles have never before been subjected to such a concentrated attack as at present, and not only from imperialist ideologists but also from revisionism, whose splitting activities are in essence a connivance in the efforts of imperialism.

...Hostile forces aim their poisoned arrows against the fundamental positions of Marxism-Leninism and against its doctrine on socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the nature and features of the socialist system, and the leading role of the working class and its communist vanguard.

...In the situation obtaining last August in Czechoslovakia, the ideas raised up on the shield of the antisocialist forces served as nothing more than a cover, a smokescreen, for the criminal plans and actions of the counterrevolution. And in the face of a direct threat to the cause of socialism, the question is resolved by real opposition to those forces that hide behind this screen and mask themselves with it.

...The stake on the virus of nationalism is one of the chief means of diversionary activity of all enemies of the socialist world. Modern revisionism and the contemporary authors of "new models" for socialism and of "national variants" of Marxism-Leninism are also nibbling at this bait. And the right and "left" opportunists are essentially repeating in different ways the old subterfuge of Kautskiyism, which replaced proletarian internationalism with embellished bourgeois nationalism.

...The CPSU is doing everything necessary to consolidate the self-dependence and sovereignty of the socialist states and resolutely opposes interference in the internal affairs of any people or country. But here it also takes into account the fact that there exist common interests of revolutionary struggle and common law-governed sequences for socialist building, and that a retreat from these can lead to a retreat from socialism, the defense of which is the subject of active concern by all the socialist countries. This position of our party has found vivid expression in its attitude toward events in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, toward the intrigues of hostile forces against the socialist system in that country, intrigues which affect the fundamental interests of the entire socialist community.

...As L.I. Brezhnev said at the Fifth PZPR Congress: "Let those who are inclined to forget the lessons of history and who would like once more to engage in recarving the map of Europe know that the frontiers of Poland, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia, and any other country which is a member of the Warsaw Pact are unshakable and inviolable. These frontiers are protected by the entire armed might of the socialist community.

Excerpts from Khrushchev's Secret Speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, 24 February 1956.

When we look at many of our novels, films and historical "scientific studies," the role of Stalin in the Patriotic War appears to be entirely improbable. Stalin has foreseen everything. The Soviet Army, on the basis of a strategic plan prepared by Stalin long before, used the tactics of so-called "active defense," i.e., tactics which, as we know, allowed the Germans to come up to Moscow and Stalin grad. Using such tactics, the Soviet Army, supposedly, thanks only to Stalin's genius, turned the offensive and subdued the enemy. The epic victory gained through the armed might of the land of the Soviets, through our heroic people, is ascribed in this type of novel, film and "scientific study" as being completely due to the strategic genius of Stalin.

We have to analyze this matter carefully because it has a tremendous significance not only from the historical, but especially from the political, educational and practical point of view.

What are the facts of this matter?...

During the war and after the war, Stalin put forward the thesis that the tragedy which our nation experienced in the first part of the war was the result of the "unexpected" attack of the Germans against the Soviet Union. But, comrades, this is completely untrue...

Documents which have now been published show that by 3 April 1941 Churchill, through his Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., Cripps, personally warned Stalin that the Germans had begun regrouping their armed units with the intent of attacking the Soviet Union...

We must assert that information of this sort concerning the threat of German armed invasion of Soviet territory was coming in also from our own military and diplomatic sources; however, because the leadership was conditioned against such information, such data was dispatched with fear and assessed with reservation...

Despite these particularly grave warnings, the necessary steps were not taken to prepare the country properly for defense and to prevent it from being caught unawares.

Did we have time and the capabilities for such preparations? Yes, we had the time and capabilities...

Had our industry been mobilized properly and in time to supply the Army with the necessary matériel, our wartime losses would have been decidedly smaller. Such mobilization had not been, however, started in time. And already in the first days of the war it became evident that our Army was badly armed, that we did not have enough artillery, tanks and planes to throw the enemy back...

Shortly before the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Hitlerite Army, Kirponos, who was chief of the Kiev Special Military District (he was later killed at the front) wrote to Stalin that the German armies were at the Bug River, were preparing for an attack and in the very near future would probably start an offensive. In this connection, Kirponos proposed that a strong defense be organized, that 300,000 people be evacuated from the border areas and that several strong points be organized there: antitank

Moscow answered this proposition with the assertion that this would be a provocation, that no preparatory defensive work should be undertaken at the borders, that the Germans were not to be given any pretext for the initiation of military action against us. Thus, our borders were insufficiently prepared to repel the enemy.

When the fascist armies had actually invaded Soviet territory and military operation had begun, Moscow issued the order that the German fire was not to be returned. Why? It was because Stalin, despite evident facts, thought that the war had not yet started, that this was only a provocative action on the part of several undisciplined sections of the German Army, and that our reaction might serve as a reason for the Germans to begin the war...

As you see, everything was ignored: warnings of certain Army commanders, declarations of deserters from the enemy army, and even the open hostility of the enemy. Is this an example of the alertness of the chief of the party and of the state at this particularly significant historical moment?

And what were the results of this carefree attitude, this disregard of clear facts? The result was that in the first hours and days the enemy destroyed in our border regions a large part of our Air Force, artillery and other military equipment; he annihilated large numbers of our military cadres and disorganized our military leadership; consequently we could not prevent the enemy from marching deep into the country...

Very grievous consequences, especially in reference to the beginning of the war followed Stalin's annihilation of many military commanders and political workers during 1937-1941 because of his suspiciousness and through slanderous accusations. During these years repressions were instituted against certain parts of military cadres beginning literally at the company and battalion commander level and extending to the higher military centers; during this time the cadre of leaders who had gained military experience in Spain and in the Far East was almost completely liquidated.

All this brought about the situation which existed at the beginning of the war and which was the great threat to our Fatherland...

It would be incorrect to forget that, after the first severe disaster and defeats at the front, Stalin thought that this was the end. In one of his speeches in those days he said: "All that which Lenin created we have lost forever."

After this Stalin for a long time actually did not direct the military operations and ceased to do anything whatever. He returned to active leadership only when some members of the Political Bureau visited him and told him that it was necessary to take certain steps immediately in order to improve the situation at the front.

Therefore, the threatening danger which hung over our Fatherland in the first period of the war was largely due to the faulty methods of directing the nation and the party by

Stalin was very far from an understanding of the real situation which was developing at the front. This was natural because, during the whole Patriotic War, he never visited any section of the front or any liberated city except for one short ride on the Mozhaisk highway during a stabilized situation at the front. To this incident were dedicated many literary works full of fantasies of all sorts and so many paintings. Simultaneously, Stalin was interfering with operations and issuing orders which did not take into consideration the real situation at a given section of the front and which could not help but result in huge personnel losses.

All the more shameful was the fact, that after our great victory over the enemy which cost us so much, Stalin began to downgrade many of the commanders who contributed so much to the victory over the enemy, because Stalin ex-

cluded every possibility that services rendered at the front should be credited to anyone but himself...

And, further, writes Stalin:

"Stalin's military mattership was displayed both in defense and offense. Comrade Stalin's genius enabled him to divine the enemy's plans and defeat them. The battles in which Comrade Stalin directed the Soviet armies are brilliant examples of operational military skill."

In this manner was Stalin praised as a strategist. Who did this? Stalin himself, not in his role as a strategist but in the role of an author-editor, one of the main creators of his self-adulatory biography. Such, comrades, are the facts. We should rather say shameful facts....

Some Recent Articles on Re-Stalinization
and Neo-Stalinism

"Soviets Try To Rewrite Stalin Role" by Charlotte Saikowski, Christian Science Monitor, 18 December 1968

"Re-Stalinization In the Soviet Union" by Michael Csizmas, Der Klare Blick (The Clear View), Bern, 13 November 1968

"Stalin-Type Prison Camps Still Exist In USSR" by Anatol Martchenko Corrispondenza Socialista, Rome, October 1968

"Czechoslovak Reforms Squashed by Soviet Neo-Stalinism" by Kx Neue Zuercher Zeitung, Zurich, 25 September 1968

"Staline Rehabilite?" Le Monde, Paris, 6 February 1969

"The Heirs of Stalin", by Frank Hardy, Sunday London Times, London, 8 December 1968

"Stalin depicted as father figure", from Edmund Stevens - Moscow, February 4, London Times, London, 5 February 1969

"Resurrecting Stalin, Despite Khrushchev", by Theodore Shabad New York Times, New York, 9 February 1969

"Neo-Stalinism gains in Soviet Union", by Paul Wohl, Christian Science Monitor, 22 October 1968

"Moscow Is Returning To Stalinism" An analysis of Mr. Brezhnev's speech at the 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Poland, by K. Fillippas Eleftheros Kosmos, Athens, 20 November 1968

"Neo-Stalinism * An Inside Report of the New Reign of Fear", Sunday Times, London, 12 January 1969

"Stalin a War Hero Again" Party Assails Khrushchev's 'Inventions' by Anatole Shub, Washington Post, Washington, D.C., 4 February 1969

"Neo-Stalinism", by Alexander Korab, Hannoversche Allgemeine, Hanover, Germany, 6 September 1968

Books Reviewed by Dr. E. Boltin in his article "The Moving Pages of the Annals of the Great Fatherland War," Moscow, Kommunist, No. 2, 1969.

- a) Marshal of the Soviet Union A.A. Grechko, "The Caucasus Battle," 424 pages, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1967.
- b) Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev, "1945," 280 pages, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1966.
- c) Marshal of the Soviet Union K.A. Meretskov, "Serving the People, Memoirs," 464 pages, Political Publishing House, Moscow, 1968.
- d) Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky, "Soldier's Duty," 380 pages, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1968.
- e) Army General S.M. Shtemenko, "The General Staff in the War Years," 416 pages, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1968.
- f) Colonel General of Engineering-Technical Services A.S. Yakovlev, "The Purpose of Life, or Notes by an Aircraft Designer," 624 pages, Political Publishing House, Moscow, 1968. (revised edition)

Note: In his reviews of the above books, Dr. Boltin quotes no statement concerning Stalin in a), b), and d). In book c), the review noted only that the book's author worked with 7 named persons including Stalin. The review of book f) notes concerning Stalin only that the author judged that Stalin showed detailed knowledge of the scientific and technical aspect of aircraft design. In Boltin's review of book e) he devotes a paragraph to Shtemenko's description of Stalin's role as supreme commander.